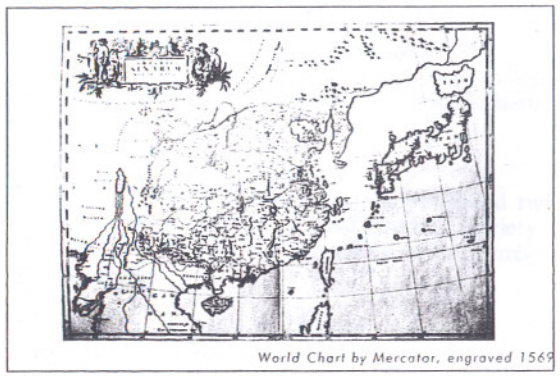


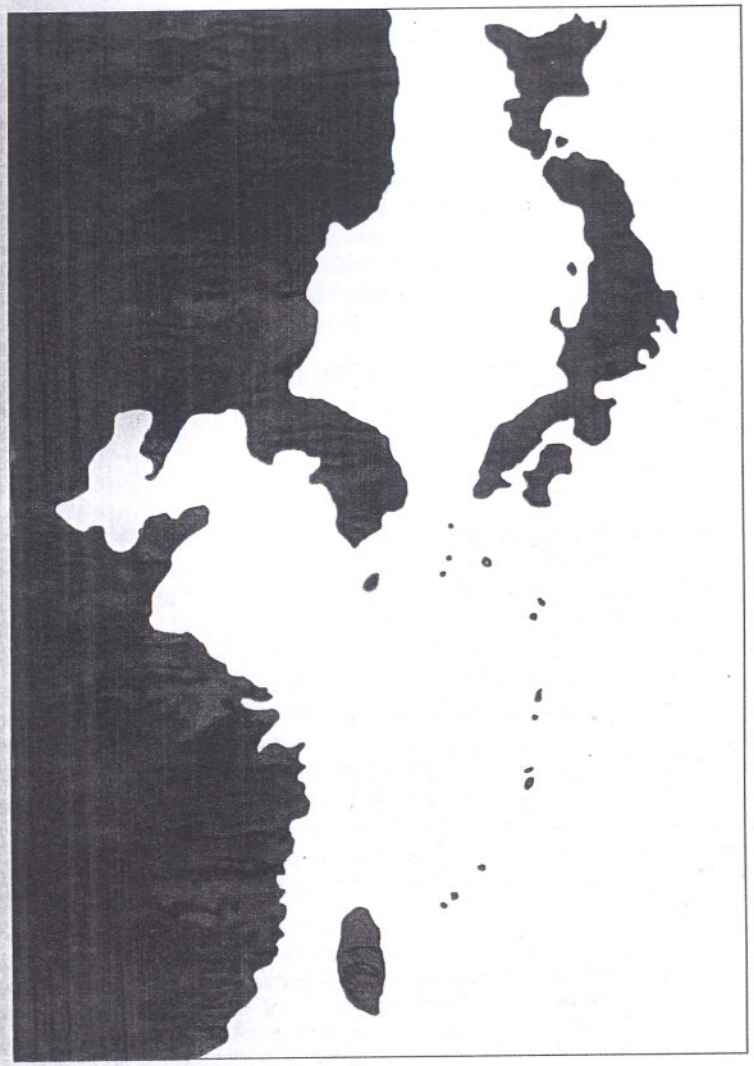
World Chart by Mercator, engraved 1569

Main Features of this Issue:

- Honour, Violence and Conflicting Narratives (Badri Narayan)
- Muslims in New Zealand (Erich Kolig)
- The Myth of Multiracialism in Singapore: The *Tudung* Incident (Law Kam-Yee)
- Interpreting Chinese Tradition and Identity in Singapore (Selina Ching Chan)
- Deconstructing Japanization (Thang Leng Leng & S. K. Gan)
- Electoral Systems, Representational Roles and Legislator Behaviour (Ian Holliday & Michael Gallagher)
- Syncope in the *Te*-form with Auxiliary Verbs (Junji Kawai)
- The Use of kare/kanojo in Japanese Society Today (Yasuko Obana)
- Japanese and Non-Japanese Perception of Japanese Communication (Michael Haugh)
- A Mobile Phone of One's Own (Raquel Hill)

New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies

Volume 5 Number 1



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HONOUR, VIOLENCE AND CONFLICTING NARRATIVES: A STUDY OF MYTH AND REALITY

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The daughter of the king of Rampur fell in love with the son of a Dom (a low-caste of India). When the king heard about it he commanded his soldiers to behead him. After searching in the jungle for many years the soldiers succeeded in capturing the boy and killed him under a 'taal tree'. It is said that since then, the screams of the boy can still be heard in that grove.

A Bhojpuri Folk tale, collected from Sahar, Bhojpur, Bihar

The Myths

In the district of Manghyr in South Bihar, a godling named Murkatwa is worshipped by the Musahars. He is the deified ghost of Musahar (a very low caste in the social strata of the Indian society), who was killed under peculiarly tragic circumstances. Murkatwa was a labourer working on the farm of an upper caste cultivator. It is said that the cultivator sent him to his house to fetch some seedlings. When Murkatwa returned, the cultivator noticed a spot of sindoor (vermillion) on his forehead, and concluded that he had had a liaison with his married daughter who was visiting her natal family. Murkatwa was innocent but the cultivator, in a fit of rage, killed him. Since then Murkatwa is worshipped as a martyr by the people of the Musahar caste.

In the District of Gaya in South Bihar, Raghuni, a cultivator belonging to the upper caste (Babhan, which is the local name for the Bhumihar caste), killed his daughter and one of his hereditary serfs whom he had sent to fetch a

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basket of seeds from his house, when he found streaks of vermillion on the serf's body. He then committed suicide. The ghosts of all these three persons are now collectively known under the name of Raghuni Dak and are widely worshipped throughout the District of Gaya in South Bihar. These myths were collected and documented by George Grierson in his famous work *Bihar Peasant Life*.[2]

The Real Scene

The myths narrated above, which are widely circulated in villages of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, are still alive in the oral narratives of many rural societies of North India. The actual facts behind them are difficult to establish, but the moral values projected in the myths are still prevalent in these societies, which are dominated by Brahminical and patriarchial norms. Even today one can find many incidents of violence emanating from inter-caste and inter-community love relations. Many incidents that took place in the near past in the villages of western Uttar Pradesh and Bihar make it obvious that these norms still heavily influence the mindset of rural society.

In 1991, in Hukari village, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Alipur and Pali Mukimpur police station, two dalit youths, Brijendra and RamKrishan, fell in love with two girls belonging to the Jat caste (a land-owning upper caste). When the villagers learned of the relationship, they summoned the Panchayat (village council) to decide the case. According to the decision of the Panchayat, the two youths were hanged and one of the Jat girls named Roshni was also hanged. This cruel decision of the Panchayat, a body of village elders who have the authority to take decisions regarding social justice in the village, is starkly reminiscent of the cruel oppressions on love relations in the medieval era. Their decision was based on the notion that a girl's chastity is the symbol of the honour of the caste to which she belongs.[3]

In August 1993, in Darbhanga district of Bihar, Jaya, a daughter of a Brahmin family was handed over to goondas (thugs) by her own family members as she was in love with a Harijan youth. She was raped and murdered by them, after which her body was thrown into the river.[4]

In February 1994, in Hathigadha village in the Mandu block of Hazaribagh district in Bihar, Malti, a girl of the Kurmi caste, fell in love with a Harijan youth, Mahabi Rabidas. Both eloped and got married. When the members of the Kurmi caste heard the news, they captured Mahabi Rabidas and presented him in front of the village Panchayat. As per the decision of the Panchayat, Mahabi was severely beaten and then killed.[5]

[2] George A. Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life, Being a Discursive Catalogue* (1885), Delhi: Cosmo Publication (reprinted) 1975.
[3] Dr. Shyoraj Singh Baichan, 'Samajik Jarhta evam Varnavadi Swabhav,' *Hindustan*, August 27, 1991.
[4] *Samkalin Janmat*, Delhi, 1995, pp.16-30, *Jansatta*, Delhi, 15 September 1997, p.3.
[5] See *Jansatta*, Delhi, p.3 and 'First Information Report' (FIR) no.147.

In Murubandra village, within the jurisdiction of the Rajrappa police station of Hazaribagh district, Bihar, a local tribal youth, Chaturgun Karmali, was in love with the daughter of Manu Mahto, a Kurmi. In September 1997, Chaturgun was tried by the Panchayat under the leadership of Mangal Singh Ohdar of the Communist Party of India (CPI). According to the decision of the Panchayat, Chaturgun was brutally murdered by the villagers.[6]

Honour and Violence

Love is the emotion that binds two hearts together. It knows no language, age, creed or caste barriers, but in the north Indian societies of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which are strongly influenced by hierarchical feudal and Brahminical values, if the lovers belong to different communities, love can also be the root of feuds and violence between the communities to which the lovers belong. In these rural societies, *joru, zamin and beti* (wife, land and daughter), are still considered to be the exclusive possessions of males that have to be protected from all forms of external aggression, whether it is the honour of the wife and daughter at stake, or the usurping of personal property. The protection of such private property is considered to be the *dharma* or duty of the males and is a part of their *purusharth* (masculinity).

In these societies, marriage, symbolised by the vermillion mark in the parting of the hair of women, is the only situation which legitimises the relationship between an unrelated man and a woman. In no other situation is a relationship between a man and a woman who do not belong to the same family, tolerated. Before the marriage of a girl, it is her father's duty to safeguard her virginity and hand her over to her husband with her chastity and honour intact. After marriage, her husband is the saviour of her honour, since she is now his private property. Later, when her sons grow up, it becomes their duty to protect their mother's honour. It is believed that the destiny of a woman is always under the protection of a male: in childhood, the father, in youth, the husband and in widowhood, the sons. Marriages are arranged strictly within the boundaries of caste configurations and are negotiated according to the wishes of the two families. No aberration from this situation in the form of a love relationship between a boy and a girl belonging to different castes and communities is tolerated under any circumstances. In the event of a girl belonging to a higher caste and the boy belonging to a lower caste, the entire lower caste community incurs the wrath of the upper caste for dishonouring their community. In this case, the situation becomes even more volatile, leading to certain violence that may carry on over generations.

Many incidents of this kind that occurred in the past have become part of the folklore of the local people and are still narrated and recounted by them. These have now become entrenched in the popular imagination of ordinary

[6] Ibid.

people, who are greatly influenced by the values and standards imposed by the *Manusmriti* and other Brahminical religious texts of the Hindus, and have been transformed into myths and legends. But the fractured nature of rural folk society may create different folk narratives centering around the same folklore. These competing versions often conflict with each other, since each caste group narrates the narrative from its own vantage point, and this may differ considerably from the perspectives of other castes. One community may perceive the male lover as their hero who has been wronged by the family members of the female lover, while another community may create the myth of an anti-hero who captivated the heroine and trapped her in his net. Yet another community may portray the female as the one who seduced the hero with her youth and beauty and forced him to fall in love with her. Myths thus transgress the boundaries of reality and reality is gradually transformed into myth.

It is worth mentioning here that, in terms of inciting mobilisation and violence, the myths constructed around such social events are no less influential or contested than other folk narratives. The heroes carved out of these myths are as powerful as real life heroes for the communities that create them. In most of these communities, there was no single hero who could mobilise the entire community to inspire them to struggle against the oppressive dominance of the forward castes, although some leadership developed autonomously in some sections. Thus the creation of these heroes from myths was often the outcome of this search for a person who could lead the struggle against this form of oppression. These legendary heroes were transformed into a role model for the community and his stories and narratives were widely circulated and narrated among the members.

One such hero was created by a folk ballad that was based on an asymmetrical love relationship between a boy of a dalit caste (Chuharmal, who belonged to the Dusadh caste) and a girl belonging to an upper caste (Reshma, who belonged to the Bhumihar caste). This work deals with the phenomenon of violence that took place around this asymmetrical love relationship between Chuharmal and Reshma and tries to analyse the relationship between the myths and realities centering around this story. The propositions I shall dwell upon in this essay are the following.

Firstly, due to the unfinished project of modernisation in rural Indian societies, especially in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which are still deeply influenced by Brahminical and patriarchial norms, inter-caste love relations in general and, especially, asymmetrical love relations involving a girl belonging to a higher caste and a boy belonging to a lower caste, are still not tolerated. This situation gives rise to caste violence and feuds. The violence and conflicts take place at two levels; i.e., at the level of memory, narrative and imagination and in people's real lives.

Secondly, apart from its entertainment value, folklore also acts as a record of social events and processes. Myths thus act as social texts which record the various kinds of conflict, negotiation, and human and social relations that take place in society. This folklore carries within it social

memory, but it also creates memory for the people. That is why it can become the bone of contention between communities.

Thirdly, the memory related to a conflict that took place in a society, that has been transformed into myth and narrative and is again being circulated among the common people, gets changed, selectively edited and recreated in the process of inter-personal and inter-group communication. Myths, commemorative monuments, religious rituals, folk tales and family lore are the vehicle of collective memory.[7] I argue that collective memory is not an innocent, univocative and unified domain but is part of a contested and fragmented whole. It is contested because the way in which the past is recalled depends upon the power of the group that frames its (collective, traditional) memory.[8] Memory (historical memory) is the constitutive element of the identity of the group.

The methodology of this paper is based on observations and field studies in the Aurungabad, Patna and Bhojpur districts of Bihar, where, at selected places, I collected oral renderings of symbols and texts that are used in the contemporary life of common people, as well as in the political and religious discourse of these societies. From this field work, an attempt has been made to analyse the folk myth of Chuharmal and Reshma and relate it to the contemporary socio-political context.

Chuharmal and Reshma

The actual story of Chuharmal and Reshma is difficult to ascertain, but it is believed that the events described in the story took place in the Magadh and Bhojpuri regions of Bihar. The *nichli kaumen* (lower caste people) recite it as a folk ballad and perform it as a *nautanki* (folk theatre) named "Rani Reshma Chuharmal ka khela". Every year in the *chaityamah* (month of Chait of the Indian calendar), a fair is held at Charadih near Mokama in *yaadgari* (remembrance) of the Dusadh hero of this story. This story has many versions, most of which conflict with one another. The story is now a bone of contention, an issue of conflict and violence between the Bhumihars and the lower castes, especially the Dusadhs, of that region. The manner in which the story is remembered by the Dusadhs makes it a constitutive element in their identity formation. It is a story of their glorious past and the rich tradition of their community. Chuharmal is a hero and god of the lower castes of the region and the folk legend is a symbol of the victory of the Dusadhs over the Bhumihars. But the Bhumihars interpret their version as a conscious attempt

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[7] See Daniel Gordon, A review essay of *History as an Art of Memory* (by P.H. Hutton), *History and Theory* 34 (1995): 340-354. Postmodernists such as Francois Furet and Pierre Nora deconstruct the idea of collective memory. See, for instance, Pierre Nora *Les Lieux de memoire*, 7 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1992. See also Maurice Halbawchs *On Collective Memory*, edited by Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

[8] Maurice Halbawchs *Les Cadres Sociaux de la memoire* (1925), New York: Ayer, 1975, pp.83-145.

by the lower castes to insult them. They are trying hard to erase this story through the use of violence, while the lower castes are struggling hard to save and preserve it. This conflict over differing interpretations of the story led to four caste-riots in central Bihar between 1970 and 1990.

Theatrical Performances Inciting Violence

On 19th June, 1978, in Ekauni village, near Daudnagar in the Aurungabad district of Bihar, a marriage party (*barat*) had just arrived at the house of Nonu Sahu. A folk theatre (*nautanki*) was being performed in the *khalihan* (a neat and clean place in the village where grain is extracted from paddy husk). Just as the love scene of Reshma and Chuharmal started to be enacted, a bullet was fired from among the spectators, which entered the chest of the actor playing the role of Chuharmal. A roaring sound echoed, "Stop this nonsense", and there followed a stampede among the spectators.

This incident is not a part of any fiction but is a real event that took place in the interior area of Aurungabad. Subsequently, two groups were formed in the village. One was led by the Bhumihars (a landlord forward caste) and the other group comprised lower castes, viz., Bania, Koiri, Chamar, Dusadh and others. Great tension and conflict took place between the Bhumihar Tola (group) and the Purvi Tola (populated by the lower castes) of the village. In fact, the bullet was fired by a youth of the Bhumihar caste because Reshma, the heroine of the play, belonged to this caste. The Bhumihar perceived this narrative as an insult to their caste.[9] On the other hand, the lower castes adopted this same myth as a mode of protest against the feudal and elite class of this region. Five murders occurred during this prolonged tension and conflict, as well as many minor conflicts and much factionalism.

The news of this event was published in a Bhojpuri local daily *Tatka* on 2nd February 1978. The police of the Daudnagar *thana* (police station) maintained that the event was simply a result of long continuing and recorded caste tension. However, the villagers believed that the cause of the caste tension in the village was the drama of Chuharmal and the memories that the ballad sought to retrieve and preserve. They felt that the reason for the attack by the Bhumihars during the *nautanki* was that they took it as an insult to their community. The people of the village have given the event the name of "Ekauni-Kand", which is now imprinted in their memory. *Kand* is an event that contains flashing elements, the memory of which lasts long.[10]

[9] Upper castes, especially the Bhumihars, perceive this narrative as an insult because it undermines their social prestige. It establishes the superiority of the subaltern and the lower castes. It breaks the hierarchical norms and alters the hierarchical condition of the Bhumihar caste. All these upper caste feudal values are based on the *maryada* (custom or correct behaviour) concept described in the Hindu law code *Manusmriti* and other Hindu law texts.

[10] In Indian religious epics like *Ram Charit Manas*, *kand* denotes the meaning 'chapter', but here it denotes the meaning of a specific event.

About forty percent of the people living in the Ekauni village belonged to the Bhumihar caste, while the remaining sixty percent included Banias, Koiri, Yadav, Chamar, Dusadh and other lower castes. The village was a high caste dominated village where Bhumihars had major land holdings. The lower castes possessed very little land. They were either small businessmen or were involved in traditional occupations. The Dusadh and Chamar landless labourers worked on the lands of the Bhumihars. The local dialect of the region was Magahi, a term derived from the word 'Magadhi' denoting the Magadh region.

As in most rural parts of the north of the country, Bihar's society is divided and fragmented on lines of caste, class and religion. The Backward Castes constitute about 51.3% of the state's population, while the upper castes constitute only 13%. The rest of the population is made up of backward upper castes, scheduled castes (including untouchable and depressed castes like Dusadhs, Chamars etc.), scheduled tribes, Muslims etc. Taking a rough guide from the 1911 census, we find that in a few areas of Bihar like Bhojpur, Saran, Aurungabad, Patna, etc., the upper castes, namely the Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas, form over 25% of the population.[11] Thus, the social environment is not favourable for the emergence of any master narrative of culture, politics and society. Caste dimensions and polarisations are very much evident in interpretations of local narratives. In such oppressive and unequal conditions of social existence, the protests of the people are reflected in multiple forms and are imprinted on the social memory of oppressed people.

When we attempted to acquaint ourselves with the memory of the people related to the events that took place in Ekauni and the protests that emerged from these, we were amazed to find that in the Bhojpur-Rohtas region, which is another region characterised by caste tensions and land struggles, similar events have taken place, and these have been so extensive that they have been preserved and expressed in the form of social memories, which in turn perpetuate conflict. Another such event took place in Khutahan Bazar within the jurisdiction of the Tarari police station of Bhojpur, during the performance of a drama during Dussehra. A derogatory song sung by a Sutradhar provoked the elite castes of the region, leading to caste conflict and caste tension in this *Qasba* (small town).[12]

Theatrical performances are an effective mode for expressing the myths, narratives and folklore of the lower castes, as most of their oral traditions contain strong dramatical elements. The visual performative elements attached

[11] See Pradip Kumar Bose, *Mobility and Conflict: Social Roots of Caste Violence in Bihar, in Caste, Caste Conflict and Violence* (Surat: Centre for Social Studies), New Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1985, p.182.

[12] One of the ways in which lower castes express dissent is through laughter and parody. By these derogatory methods the lower castes tried to frustrate the workings of the authority. See Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar 1900-1948*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.100. This may be seen as a cultural representation of everyday forms of resistance by the lower caste people. This description owes its theoretical paradigm to James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

with the lower caste oral narratives have a strong impact on the audience and this medium is often used for imprinting memories in the psyche of the people. The folk theatres or *nautankis* are a true cultural representation of the people and play a significant role in shaping the social memory of the society. In ancient Indian traditional texts such as *Manu Smriti*, *Bharat Natya Shastra*, and Kautilya's *Artha Shastra*, theatrical performances including dance and other entertaining activities were considered to be inferior acts that were socially degrading for the upper castes. That was why these performances were restricted only to the lower castes, who performed them in public during social and religious ceremonies. Even today no dance party involves upper castes, although a few theatre companies might include actors belonging to the upper castes.

Theatre is still perceived as an 'inferior activity' involving lower caste actors predominantly. This fact provides the lower castes the privilege of making their oral narratives more powerful in terms of the influence they wield on an audience. These narratives have been transformed into 'weapons of the weak', expressing dissent and dissatisfaction with the existing social system. Consciously or unconsciously, people select dramas whose content and context challenges the feudal castes and their values. The irony is that they have to perform their programmes in the ceremonies of higher caste people. They earn their livelihood from those people who are opposed to the content of their plays. They entertain those against whom their consciousness works in resistance. At some places they have to face opposition when they enact their dramas without considering the social structure of the village. They are able to conclude their overnight programmes properly only where the population is not high-caste dominated. But in places where feudal castes dominate they often face physical threats.

Apart from performances by professional theatre troupes, there are also violent attacks on theatrical performances by socio-political activist groups, because they too try to highlight the oppression and injustice of the landlord castes through their dramas. When the theatre group Yuva Niti performed a play challenging the contemporary social structure in Khawaspur in the Bhojpur region of Bihar on 5th June, 1979, the Kunwar Sena raised stiff opposition to the play. When they again staged a play in Virampur on 7th August 1980, the feudal caste landlords attacked the actors. When another theatre group, the Jan Natya Manch, was performing a play in Kesath, on 3rd September, 1980, the supporters of feudal criminals opposed the play and attacked the actors.[13] The Jan Sanskriti Manch also had to face a similar

[13] Rajesh Kumar, Arvind Kumar, Morcha Lagata Natak, Bhagalpur, 1990. Safdar Hashmi, a theatre artiste of Delhi, was brutally murdered by goons of the ruling party (Congress I) on January 1, 1989, while he and his street theatre group Jan Natya Manch was performing the play 'Halla Bol'. See Sudhanva Deshpande, 'Sahmat and Politics of Cultural Intervention,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 22, 1996. Recently Gaddar, a cultural activist, poet and performer (convenor of Jan Natya Mandali of Andhra Pradesh) was shot at his residence by suspected police agents due to his anti-power cultural activities. See Kancha Ilaiah, 'Gaddar: Embodying Many Institutions,' *Seminar* 456, 1997, pp.32-35.

situation when the supporters of criminals attacked the actors during the staging of a play on 16th August 1982, in Bagain. All the incidents mentioned above took place in the Bhojpur district of Bihar, which is notorious for its caste conflicts and social tensions.

The drama of Reshma and Chuharmal is one example of such a dance-drama that has instigated much caste tension and violence. Many clashes occurred around this drama when it was performed by various *nach* groups (dance parties) in villages like Mahendra Bigaha (1976) and Phoolari in 1988 in the Aurungabad district of Bihar. The manager of the Nagesar dance troupe, which is the most famous dance troupe in Bhojpur, commented that the drama is not staged by their company any more since it provokes the feudal lords to fire bullets at the actors. In spite of such opposition to the staging of the drama of Reshma and Chuharmal, the myth has grown in popularity among the lower castes through these dance troupes. The north eastern part of Bihar, in particular, has been significantly influenced by this myth, although it is perceived by different classes in different ways. Lower castes and classes glorify this myth and perceive it as a part of their 'tradition'.[14] According to them this was a real event that happened sometime in the past.[15] This is the historical memory of the group, which they perceive as real. One might observe the transformation of the memory attached with this myth into history through their collective memory.

Orality, Festivity and Recurrence

According to legend, the actual drama of Reshma and Chuharmal took place in the *Tal* area of Mokama and Badha Badhaiyya, situated at the boundary of Patna, Begusarai and Nalanda district of Bihar. *Tal* is the name for a vast stretch of uninhabited cultivated land. Reshma and Chuharmal are believed to have hailed from this region. This region is dominated by Bhumihars, the land owning caste of Bihar. The drama of Reshma and Chuharmal is totally banned in this region because the Bhumihars feel that it shows the upper caste people in a bad light. According to popular belief there is also a *vardaan* (blessing of the Goddess or *devi*) that if any man sings the song of Reshma and Chuharmal he will be sure to attract the women of that region. The local inhabitants believe that even today there are some surviving descendants of

[14] In *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and others argue that " Some traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. An 'invented tradition' is a set of ritual or symbolic practices that inculcate certain values and norms by establishing continuity with a suitable historic past" : see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Tradition,' in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp.1-2.

[15] In fact, this shows the tendency towards a mythical construction of the past. Here 'past' is conceived as a set of propositions, often stated in narrative form, and accepted uncritically by a culture or speech community thus serving to affirm its self-conception. See Peter Heehs, 'Myth, History and Theory,' *History and Theory*, 33, 1 (1994):1-19.

Reshma and Chuharmal living in the area.[16] According to the myth, Reshma belonged to a rich family of the Bhumihar Kshatriya of the Mokama village while Chuharmal belonged to a Dusadh family residing in a village named Anjani.[17] Reshma's brother's name was Ajab Singh and father's name was Ranjit Singh, and Chuharmal's father's name was Bihari while his brother's name was Bansiram Surma.

The folklore of Reshma and Chuharmal is alive and thriving even today. Its hero lives in the memory of the people of that region and its neighbouring areas. To commemorate his memory, a fair is held for two or three days each year in the month of Chaitya in the Mokama Tal area, where there is a sacred complex in the name of Chuharmal.[18] The people of the Dusadh caste come in lakhs (hundreds of thousands) to worship the Dusadh hero and visit the fair. In a nearby village named Mor, a large statue of Chuharmal without the neck has been erected. During the harvest season, the first crop is offered to this statue. People come here for *Manauti* (to pray for the fulfilment of their wishes). The lower castes, particularly, believe that their wishes will be fulfilled. They also show their commemorative spirit by beating the *danka* (drum), dancing, jumping and playing *gadaka* (a play of sticks). Mainly the Dusadhs and a small number of other lower castes attend this fair.

It is interesting to observe how a hero of a story has become the hero of depressed and untouchable castes like the Dusadhs and is worshipped as a local deity by them. This may be a reflection of the sense of dissent of these communities against the dominance of the Bhumihars. It may be considered to be a subversion of social reality, whereby such heroes acquire the status of a local deity. Because of the difficulties that the lower castes face in visibly protesting the dominance and injustice of the feudal landlord castes, they create an alternative space for expressing their dissent through development of their own heroes and deities. Many folklorists who studied the creation of local deities around 1925, interpreted them as a form of 'ghost worship', but the changing nature of the narratives attached with these deities leads us to explore an alternative social meaning for their creation, one that interprets them in terms of the structure of local societies.[19]

[16] This is an example of a typical fear psychosis of the feudal male-dominated society. It shows their approach towards women. In fact, this ban is imposed by mainly feudal forces and upper castes of the respective society.

[17] Mahadeo Prasad Singh, of Ayana village, is a folklorist who has collected the folk drama based on the folklore of Chuharmal and has made extensive fieldwork to trace the genealogy of Chuharmal and Reshma.

[18] The Chuharmal fair is a sacred complex where, through prescribed propitiatory rites, magic, invocations and incantations designed to please the unseen Chuharmal, pilgrims try to establish communication with him.

[19] Kalipada Mitra, 'Deities of Jalkar (A Rejoinder),' *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Patna, Sept-Dec.1929, pp.181-186. In African societies there was a similar trend of creating gods of the oppressed. See James H. Cone *God of the Oppressed*, New York: Seabury, 1975. One may also notice this tendency in the discourse on Black theology: see James H. Cone *Black Theology and Black Power*, New York: Seabury, 1969.

Although the Dusadhs glorify Chuharmal as their hero and local deity, this myth is remembered and narrated by the various other castes of the region in their own way. There are multiple texts of this myth and the fractured nature of folk society is reflected in the various contesting versions of this myth.

Multiple Texts

A social text such as a rumour, gossip, story or folklore multiplies in manifold ways. The narrative identity of a community, culture or nation is not a rigid structure. Continuous contestation from within renders multiplicity a possibility. A single story may be transformed into many stories. The tale of Reshma and Chuharmal is an instance of a text multiplying in this way. Each new text contains a peculiar social meaning and manifests a particular political position. The multiplicity of the texts indicates the manifold character of collective remembrance, which is not a mechanical act but is a product of creative imagination. Remembrance is not just an individual phenomenon but is a social phenomenon based on selective memory. Thus memory is not an innocent, univocal and unified domain. That is why there are many versions of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal in Mokama and its neighbouring areas.

Most of these versions are narrated at the same time among the various communities in conflicting ways. The collected versions of this story reflect the changes, additions and contestations at the level of popular narrative. I have compared the versions recorded at various times by ethnographers (i.e., colonialists, natives or other folklorists) with the material which I collected during the course of my fieldwork in the months of April, May and June, 1996.

In 1885 George A. Grierson referred to Chuharmal as the 'first thief'. According to him Chuharmal was a thief and an inhabitant of Mokama. He was killed by Sahles, a great hero of the Dusadhs of Mithila and the 'first watchman'. This story was developed by Grierson in two texts, namely *Bihar Peasant Life, Being a Discursive Catalogue* and *Maithili Chrestomathy*.[20] William Crooke also related this story in the same way in his book *Folklore of India*.[21] In both the sources Chuharmal is mentioned in a few lines while narrating the heroic lore of Sahles.

In 1894, Ram Garib Chaube, one of the collectors of folklore for his Sahib (Master) William Crooke, presents an entirely different version of the story. In his narrative, Chuharmal appears as a Dusadh hero marrying a Brahmin girl. He puts it as follows. Chuharmal was one of the lovers of Rahu Reshma, the sister of Ajabi. One day when she was drawing water from a

[20] See George A. Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life, Being a Discursive Catalogue* (1885), Delhi: Cosmo Publications, (reprinted) 1975, and *Maithili Chrestomathy* in his 'Introduction to Maithili Language of North Bihar,' *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta), Extra Number, 1882.

[21] William Crooke, *Folklore of India*, New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1993 (First Reprint), p.125; (reprint of An Introduction to the Folklore of North India (Allahabad, 1894).

well, Chuharmal suddenly came there and entered into conversation with her. The pitcher being very heavy, she requested that Chuharmal lift it onto her head. While doing so, Chuharmal took hold of her garment and robbed her honour. Reshma returned home and complained to her brother Ajabi about Chuharmal. He flew into a rage and, with a drawn sword, went to fight a duel with Chuhar. Chuhar defeated Ajabi, Reshma's brother, but Ajabi sent his sister back to Chuhar as she was of no use to the family after being defiled by a Dusadh. Chuharmal at first refused to marry her, but later he accepted her as his wife and took her to Morang.[22]

In 1938 Mahadev Prasad, a folklorist of Nachap, Arrah, Bihar, collected a *Panwara* (a eulogy) called *Rani Reshma ka Geet*. In the introductory note he wrote that this was a folklore that is recited by the members of the Dusadh community.[23] This episode took place a long time ago in the Mokama area. It is said that even today when this folklore is recited, the upper caste girls of the area tend to elope with the boys of the Dusadh community. In this story Reshma is shown to be a very beautiful daughter of a local landlord of the Bhumihar caste who falls in love with Chuharmal. Reshma would invite Chuharmal to her house to visit her. Initially Chuharmal resisted her offers since she was the daughter of a high caste zamindar whereas he belonged to the lower caste Dusadh community. Reshma seduced him into marrying her but this relationship led to a clash between Chuharmal and Reshma's father. Chuharmal defeated her father but he was grief-stricken because Reshma's brother, who was Chuharmal's *gurubhai* (God-brother) was killed by him. Chuharmal was so depressed that he jumped into the river Ganges and died. On hearing the news, Reshma too killed herself.

In 1967 Nageshwar Sharma[24] recorded a folk ballad that runs as follows. There was a small village named Anjani where there lived a person called Bandi Ram who was a Dusadh by caste. Bandi Ram had an extremely handsome son called Chuharmal. Bandi Ram and his brother Bihari were in the service of Babu Ajabi Singh, the wealthiest zamindar of Mokama. Reshma, a sister of Ajabi Singh, became captivated by Chuharmal, becoming oblivious to her status and prestige. Once Chuharmal went to have a bath in the

[22] Ram Garib Chaube, *North Indian Notes and Queries*, July 1894, pp.62-63.

[23] Mahadev Prasad, *Rani Reshma ka Geet* (first edition), Calcutta: Doodhnath Press, n.d. Twenty editions of the book have appeared so far. In the 19th edition the title of the book was changed to *Rani Reshma-Chuharmal ka Geet*. All editions except the first are published by Loknath Pustakalaya of Calcutta. It is interesting that the year of publication is not mentioned in any of the editions. Only the number of the particular edition is mentioned. In many of these publications of popular nature, there is a tendency not to carry the year of publication. The publisher of this book recalled that the first edition must have appeared 60-70 years ago. Most of the folklore collected by Mahadev Prasad was published between 1935-40 by Doodnath Pustakalaya, Calcutta, and Gayghat, Banaras. See Shyam Manohar Pandey's introduction to *Lorikayan*, Sahitya Bhavan Pvt. Ltd.: Allahabad, 1997. By talking to his family members I was able to fix the date of the first edition of Mahadev Prasad's book at around 1938.

[24] Nageshwar Sharma, 'Supernatural Elements in Magahi Ballads,' *Folklore*, VIII, 10, Calcutta, 1967. p.32.

Ganges. Reshma followed him and expressed her desire for him, but Chuharmal spurned her offer. Disappointed, Reshma tore her blouse and complained to her brother that Chuharmal had tried to rob her honour. Ajabi Singh ordered his soldiers to arrest Chuharmal. The news reached Chuharmal, who prayed to Goddess Durga to invoke her blessings. A terrible battle took place between Ajabi Singh and Chuharmal, but Chuharmal won the battle due to the grace of Goddess Durga. Chuharmal captured Ajabi Singh but released him when Ajabi Singh's wife appealed for mercy. Chuharmal later married an unsophisticated girl called Bhimni. One day when he went to the forest he saw a tiger trying to kill a cow. He took pity on the cow and saved her from the jaws of death. In fury, the tiger killed Chuharmal. When Reshma heard the news, she could not bear the shock and died.

Another version of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal was collected in 1971 by Samprati Aryani.[25] This story is narrated by the lower caste people of Naubatpur (Patna), who perform the drama of Virmal Chuharmal (brave warrior Chuharmal) in a drama called "Reshma". Reshma, the sister of Ajabi Singh, a zamindar of the city, is the heroine of the story. She is very beautiful and also proud of her beauty. On hearing of the bravery of Chuharmal, she falls in love with him. One day, without telling her mother, she goes to meet Chuharmal who is also a Gurubhai of her brother Ajabi Singh. After a short while Chuharmal comes to the river to drink water. Believing him to be a passer-by, Reshma asks him his name and address. Realising that he was Chuharmal himself, she requests him to come to her house to drink water. She also expresses her feelings for him. On hearing this, Chuharmal gets angry since she belongs to an upper caste. She also happens to be his *gurubehen* (God-sister, follower of the same Guru), so it was not possible for them to have a love relationship. At this, Reshma feels humiliated and reports to her brother that Chuharmal had misbehaved with her. Ajabi Singh gets ready for battle with Chuharmal. Chuharmal prays to Goddess Durga for power. She gives him a sword with which he vanquishes the entire army of Ajabi Singh. Ajabi Singh also dies in the battle. In sorrow for killing his *Gurubhai*, Chuharmal decides to undertake *jal samadhi* (killing oneself by immersing in water). When Reshma hears the news of Chuharmal's proposed *jal samadhi*, she wears the garb of a widow and visits the site of the *jal samadhi*. She prays to God that if her love is true she should also die along with Chuharmal. She then breathes her last on the *samadhi* of Chuharmal.

In a version narrated by the educated youth of Bhumihars, Chuharmal is projected as a youth born in the Bhumihar caste. This was a strategy to reduce the effect of the insult of the story on the Bhumihars. Baidya Nath Sharma, a Bhumihar intellectual, in an article titled 'Lok Giton ke Charit Nayak: Baba Chuharmal,' published in the popular Bhojpuri daily *Aryavart*, argued that while it is a popular belief that Baba Chuharmal was born in the Dusadh caste, he was actually born about 400 years ago in a Bhumihar Brahmin family of Moladiar Tola. His real and original name was Chauhar

[25] See Samprati Aryani *Magahi Bhasha aur Sahitya*, Patna: Rashtrabhasha Parishad, first edition, 1976, p.34.

Singh and he was the third child of his parents, who had a vast landed property. He was still a child when he would astonish people with his extraordinary physical power and capabilities. He also served distressed people and took part in religious and spiritual discourses. Gradually he became famous for his talents and many started visiting him to get his blessings. He also trained wrestlers at the *akhara* (gym) of Ajab Khan Pathan, a brave Pathan migrant who had a palace at Mahadev Ghat. Ajab Khan had a daughter called Reshma who was attracted to Chauhar Singh, but he looked on her as his sister. Ajab Khan's suspicions were however aroused and Chauhar was forced to break his relationship with Ajab Khan. Ajab Khan also put restrictions on the movement of Reshma, but one night she stole out to meet Chauhar Singh at Charadih. When Ajab Khan heard the news, he went there with his army to fight with Chauhar Singh, but Ajab Khan's army was defeated. After the event, Chauhar Singh assembled his Dusadh followers and attained *samadhi* in front of them. On hearing this news, Reshma too sacrificed her life at the same place. From that day, Chauhar Singh became popular as Baba Chuharmal. His Harijan Dusadh followers then began worshipping him as a god. Today, Chuharmal is worshipped on the occasion of marriage and other such ceremonies by families of Bhumihar Brahmins of Moladiar Tola in Mokama.[26]

The intellectuals and leaders of the Dusadh community registered a strong protest against this version of the narrative. They accused the Bhumihars of distorting the legend of Chuharmal. They argued that while Dr. Baidyanath Sharma had claimed that Baba Chuharmal was born in the Bhumihar caste, others, such as Shri Vilat Paswan Vihangam, Chairman of the Bihar Public Service Commission, Srimati Yasoda Devi, President of Akhil Bharatiya Dusadh Seva Sangh, Shri B.P., Shastri, General Secretary of Sahles-Chuharmal Chetna Samiti and Sri Brahma Dev Paswan, President, Baba Chuharmal Smarak Samiti, have all shown that Baba Chuharmal was in fact born in the Dusadh caste, not in the Bhumihar caste.[27]

In another version of the story, Chuharmal has been depicted as an evil power, which needed to be killed for the good of the people. According to this myth, Chuharmal was a cowherd who had the habit of destroying the crops of the landlords. As he was physically very strong they would not dare to stop him, but Chuharmal was afraid of the might of the government. Once the musclemen of the landlord and some minions of the government overpowered him and cut off his head. However, his spirit continued to

[26] See Baidyanath Sharma, 'Lok Giton ke Charit Nayak: Baba Chuharmal,' *Aryavart*, 7th December, 1980, p.4.

[27] They have also argued that on the basis of books like Shri Mahadev Prasad Singh's *Rani Reshma-Chuharmal Drama* (Calcutta: Loknath Pustakalaya), Shri Ayodhya Prasad Rai Patel's *Rani Reshma-Chuharmal* (Calcutta: Ram Dev Pustakalaya and Library) as well as the Maithili novel *Raja Sahles* by Mani Padam, the epic *Jai Raja Sahles* by Matinath Mishra, and *A Peasant Life of Bihar* by George Grierson that it is very much established that Chuharmal was born in the Anjani village of South-east Munger district. Similarly, his father's name was Biharimal, his mother's name Raghuni, his brother's Dukha Ram and his nephew's Budhuwa Dusadh.

destroy the crops of the area. Thereafter, the people started worshipping him in order to appease his spirit. This text is usually found in the memory of the forward castes. The main content of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal, i.e., their love relationship, is eliminated and other elements have been added to it.[28]

During the course of my fieldwork I came across another interpretation of the name Chuharmal. According to this interpretation, the name Chuharmal has originated from two words, i.e., Chor and Chuhar. Chor means thief and Chuhar means dacoit or robber in the folk dialect. Chor-Chuhar (thief-robber) is a compound word popular in the local dialect. Thus the people of the forward castes depict Chuharmal as a dacoit.[29]

The Dusadhs of the Mithila area, who regard Sahles as a hero and worship him, view Chuharmal as an anti-hero. In the story of Sahles that is staged in the Mithila region, Sahles and Chuharmal are depicted as enemies. Chuharmal is supposed to be a nephew of Sahles. The cause of the enmity can be understood from the following narrative: Chuharmal was employed in the palace of the king of Morang. But later somehow Sahles managed to get the job. Chuharmal decided to take revenge on Sahles but unfortunately was killed by the latter. But the Dusadhs of Magahi area talk of a deep emotional attachment between Sahles and Chuharmal. They say that Chuharmal is still alive. He had jumped into the Ganges and reached Morang, where he lives even today.

The Bhangis living in the suburbs of Mokama at a small distance from the Mokama station have their own version of the story of Chuharmal. Their colony is situated on the way to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) cantonment and has about 20 families living in houses made of mud-husk. One of them, called Hiraman, said that these Bhangis call themselves Chuhara since Chuharmal belonged to their caste.[30] The name Chuharmal originated from the word Chuhara but they are afraid to say this because of the fear that

[28] Some people remember the Chuharmal tale in other forms too. The middle castes of the Mokama region believe that there was a time when thieves and cowherds used to destroy the crops. It was because of this that food was first offered to Chuharmal in the month of Chaitra. In this version Chuharmal is a symbol of good so the people of these areas preserve his memory in a divine form.

[29] According to A.K. Warder, a Buddhist interpretation holds that in a primitive society the concept of individual possession gave birth to the notion of theft. 'Individual possession' is synonymous with stealing. See A.K. Warder *Bharatiya Itihas lekhan ki Bhumika*, Jaipur: Rajasthan Sahitya Academy, 1987 (Hindi translation from the original in English). In a Brahminical text like *Manusmriti* the word *daku* (Dacoit) means *sahasi* (courageous). But the *Manusmriti* extends the meaning of the word *sahasi* to denote a kidnapper or a plunderer of wealth, and in the law of Manu, the killing of a *sahasi* was supposed to be the duty of the king. Ranajit Guha, in his study on Pratishwar, also explored many perspectives on the thieving indulged in by the various subaltern communities of India. ('Pratishwar ki sanrachna,' in *Nimnavargiya Prasanga*, edited by Gyanendra Pandey and Shahid Amin, Delhi: Rajkamal Publications, 1929). These viewpoints conflict with the elite perception of robbery. Eric Hobsbawm *Bandits*, London: Abacus, 2001, has also explored alternative viewpoints on social banditry.

[30] An interview with Hiraman recorded in Mokama, 12.8.1988.

the Bhumihars might terrorise them. They also might have to face great hostility from the Dusadhs.

Politics and Polemics of the Multiple Texts

As can be seen from the examples of the multiple texts, the original story of Reshma and Chuharmal has undergone a large number of changes. The differing versions of the story conflict with one another, depending on the community which is narrating the story. The reason for these contestations may also lie in the politics behind the collection of these multiple narratives. The Chuharmal legend documented by George A. Grierson is based on the story narrated by a Dom informant of Mithila. Not only does it differ from the legend being circulated in the Magahi area but is also different from the legend popular among the Dusadhs of the Mithila region. However, the legend explored by him is available in the form of a narrative that is extant among the Bhumihars of the Magadh region. On reading the description of 'Sahles ka Geet' presented by George A. Grierson, it seems he was not so much curious about the tale of Sahles itself as he was about the process of construction of the mythic mentality and the linguistics internal to the domain of Maithili which could provide answers to questions such as 'Who is a thief?', 'Who is a soldier?' etc.

In any narrative the appearance of adjectives like 'first thief' and 'first watchman' is not an innocent process. It is obviously a result of interpolation, since the folk psyche often does not seek hierarchical relations in its stories. Again, it usually refrains from attributing definitive and quantitative qualities to the elements in the story. It uses adjectives indicating the flow of time and space, e.g., 'a long time ago' (*bahut pahle ki baat hai*) or 'a lion lived in a jungle very far away'. In *Bihar Peasant Life*, Grierson fixes the identity of Chuharmal as the 'first thief', neglecting the multiple variations in his identity in different narratives. Later ethnographers and administrators of the colonial period used the identity fixed by Grierson in their profiles of Chuharmal and of the region to which he is said to have belonged.

Unlike the Dutch in Indonesia, who had specialists working side by side with the administrators in formulating the policies of their colonial administration, the British had no such institution in their colonial administrative framework. Nevertheless, the British did not do any less than the Dutch in getting to know the people they governed. Much of this work was done by administrators. The first impetus to the study of the native peoples of the empire came from such luminaries as Sir William Jones and Warren Hastings in India and Sir Stanford Raffles in the Malaysian region.

Whether it was the East India Company or the Colonial Office, the main problem confronting the British ruling in India was how to deal with the peasantry, for it was the village that was the centre of Indian life. Especially after 1858, the English officials were strictly directed to come closer to the people to know their languages and cultural heritage. However, as the

example of Grierson shows, this knowledge was invariably coloured by the colonial interests of the British, including those of the scholars. They were quick to portray the natives and their heroes in derogatory terms.

Twelve years after Grierson, Ram Garib Choubey, who was himself a folklorist and who collected folk literature for Crooke, projected Chuharmal not as a thief but as a Dusadh hero marrying a Brahmin girl. The explanation for his divergent portrayal of Chuharmal could be that he collected his story from sources that had been neglected by the British, such as the Dusadhs of the Mithila region. And in the context of Nageshwar Prasad's 1967 version of the narrative of the death of Chuharmal, the village in question fell under the zone of influence of the Arya Samajis of the Patna District. It is possible that this fact had an impact on the narrative, which states that Chuharmal died while saving a cow. Prasad, however, tends to attribute this turn in the narrative to the influence of Buddhism in this region, particularly among the lower castes. He sees in the narrative the incorporation of the Buddhist values of *karuna* and *parityag* (compassion and sacrifice). However, the lower caste people here are largely under the Hindu influence, so it is difficult to be in full agreement with Prasad.

The story narrated by Samprati Aryani (1971) had been collected from the lower caste women of Amarpura. The narrative tells that on hearing the news of the death of Chuharmal by embracing *jal samadhi*, Reshma gave up her life at the same place. After this a voice was heard from the *samadhi*: 'Always worship *behan* (sister) Reshma before you worship me.' In the story collected by others, especially from the Dusadhs in other areas, Reshma is presented as being characterless and a vamp.

With regard to Baidya Nath Sharma's version of the story, the story was influenced by the fact that Baidya Nath Sharma belonged to the Bhumihar caste and was associated with the movement of the Bhumihar Samaj. The Bhumihars regard Chuharmal as their hero who was in love with the daughter of a Muslim, a Pathan. By narrating the story of Chuharmal in this particular way they might be attempting to escape from the possible social insult caused to them through the version of the story portraying Reshma as a Bhumihar. At the same time the depiction of the father of Reshma as a Muslim might be a functional reflection of a mentality that targets Muslims at every opportunity. This version of the story that is grossly different from the version narrated by the Dusadhs shows how a folk myth linked with the identity and prestige of a caste group is able to create contestation not only in the oral society and in oral tradition but in the literate society and in print culture and in newspapers also. It also shows how the leaders of the Dusadh community came in the forefront to defend their own narrative and memory attached with their own version of myth.

The difference in the versions narrated by the Dusadhs of Mithila and Magadh reveals contesting versions within the same caste. While Chuharmal is revered as a hero by the Dusadhs of the Magahi region, he is regarded as an anti-hero by the Dusadhs of the Mithila region. Some interesting questions arise in this context: why does a caste-hero of one cultural region become an

anti-hero in another cultural region of the same caste? Is it possible that at a certain point of time in the history of a folk memory, the cultural identity of the area becomes more important than its caste-identity, which is only a part of their larger identity?

The answers to these questions may be found in the cultural identities of Magadh and Mithila, which are two different cultural and political regions of Bihar. The people of Mithila perceive themselves as culturally superior since the Mithila region is a Brahmin-dominated zone where Brahminical values are predominant. Magadh region, however, is politically more powerful and more influential than Mithila. There is thus a continuous attempt by both the regions to project their hero as being mightier than the hero of the other region. Hence, one region shows the other hero to have been defeated and places its own hero on a higher pedestal. The cultural memory of the people of Magadh and the political memory of the people of Mithila acquire a great deal of significance, since historically Magadh was a large and important state while Mithila was important because of its culture; politically it was not a very powerful state. So in a narrative emanating from the Mithila region, there might be a tendency to depict Magadh as a defeated power. This might be attributed to the imagination of the people of a politically weaker region. Probably this was also the reason why Maithili litterateurs place Sahles rather than Chuharmal on a higher plane. It may be that part of their process of identity construction is socially constructed and involves a continuous process of defining friend and enemy.[31]

These mutually contesting versions of the story of Reshma and Chuharmal that I collected during my field trip to the Magahi and Bhojpuri regions show that a unified and universal form of this myth cannot found in the same society. Again, during different periods people of the same caste have narrate the story in different ways. Thus, not only do the folk narrations change their form with regard to factors of time and space, but variations also depend on factors such as who is narrating the story, to whom it is being narrated, why it is being narrated, who is collecting it, etc. The intention and motivation of the collector also plays a role.

Conclusion

The influence of the traditional Brahminical values have given rise to a mindset among rural patriarchial society that considers women to be chattels of men whose honour and chastity have to be safeguarded. This epitomises the concept of masculinity, which is the ultimate 'dharma' (duty) of males. A daughter is the symbol of the honour of the family and any aggression on her honour is a slur on the honour of the family. It is believed that a love relationship between a man and a woman should be established only after

[31] Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp.270-71.

marriage and there is no place for any other kind of love relationship in society. The Brahminical tenets propogated by religious texts like the *Manusmriti* and other ancient Hindu Shastras, have percolated to the common people and have been transformed into practice even in their communities. Asymmetrical love relationships cause massacres, violence, and caste and family feuds that may be carried down over generations. This is especially true in rural societies of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the project of modernity (which is expected to remove this traditional mindset) has not yet been completed.

Indian society is stratified into many castes and communities that manifest themselves in a myriad of fractured and contesting socio-cultural and political hierarchical layers. Many of these castes and communities belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata are engaged in a struggle to carve out their identity and acquire social prestige. In such a situation, the memory of an asymmetrical love relationship may sharpen the conflict among these castes, leading to violence and feuds. Each of the castes may remember and narrate the myths from their own vantage-point, giving rise to multiple texts and narratives of these memories that may be the foundational element of their collective memory and narrative. Thus the hiatus between the prevailing myth and the existential realities are completely blurred and the myths become transformed into reality and the reality becomes transformed into myth. Myth is no less powerful in creating contestations and violence around such happenings than the real incidents.

Some of these myths are remembered and narrated in the form of folklore that is transmitted and circulated in the society. There is a strong link between collective memories, myths and folklore since myths are the vehicle of collective memory and some of these are circulated among the people in the form of folklore. Folklore is not only an entertaining and cultural genre but is also the oral record of various kinds of social events, dissent, dissatisfaction and protest. It is a contributing factor in the creation of the collective memory of a community. The reconstruction and remembrance of collective memories reflect any changes taking place due to the transformation of social relations and of social contexts. The myths of folklore negotiate with the identities of the various groups. This is because although folklore is a cultural product of the common folk and is often perceived as unified and innocent, people themselves are not a homogeneous cultural group. When there is an imbalance in the process of negotiation between the identities of various caste groups then the possibility of violence arises, since myths and legends may evoke the memory of these groups in various ways. Gramsci has rightly suggested that people as a category presents numerous and variously combined cultural stratification.[32] That is why there is nothing more contradictory and fragmentary than folklore.

[32] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* (ed.) David Forgacs and Geoffrey Powell-Smith (translated by William Boelhower), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985, p.125.